

f.y.i.



tea time

Devotees of tea praise it for having caffeine with added health benefits. Of course, there's also the choice of calming tea varieties. Keeping both alternatives in mind, a tea café is opening in Des Moines' East Village with the credo "rethink your drink."

Trendsetters on both coasts replaced coffee shops with tea cafés years ago. But this is Des Moines' first nod to the country's burgeoning alternative to coffee haunts. With the name Gong Fu Tea, the café will open in May and offer more than 100 tea varieties along with pastries, light lunches and various tea accouterments.

Gong Fu Tea, 414 E. Sixth St., Des Moines.

hair ball

Everyone periodically experiences a metaphorical hairball. Rarely is it fun. But leave it to the Des Moines Art Center to change that. It's organizing a hair-themed "ball" for June 12. Planners of the "Big Hair Ball" encourage people to be as outrageous as they dare when selecting their outfit for the benefit. If you're having a bad hair day or can't decide on a coif, you don't need to despair. Hair stations where your tresses will be magically transformed are part of the evening's festivities.

The "Big Hair Ball" complements "Bedecked: Costume and Coiffure," a concurrent exhibition at the Des Moines Art Center Downtown. Tickets for the event are \$30.

To purchase tickets or for more information, contact the "Big Hair Ball" hotline at 271.0331.

fresh approach

A tried-and-true gift for a hostess is a bouquet of fresh flowers. But why not spice things up with an arrangement of fresh herbs? A rustic basket or refined ceramic vessel filled with an assortment of sprouting herbs is elegant, tasty and practical.

Anyone who cooks will appreciate the immediacy of tossing fresh herb clippings into a pan or employing them as garnishes. Nearly all recipes benefit from using fresh spices instead of dried ones. But even after the food is consumed and dishes are washed, the herbs will be appreciated for the olfactory and visual pleasure they provide. An added bonus is that living plants are good feng shui.

If you don't want to make your way to a garden center, most florists can arrange a spice basket.